United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Unified Task Force restored hope to Somalia, says Secretary-General's Special Representative to that country as United Nations takes over operational authority; UNOSOM II, with broader mandate, committed to national rehabilitation and development.

- Peace plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina must be brought into force urgently, Secretary-General says in report; Security Council has begun consultations to consider concrete action, while diplomatic activity continues.

- Japanese Civilian Police killed and five Dutch UNTAC personnel wounded in attack by unidentified assailants in north-west Cambodia; United Nations agencies appeal to Cambodian leaders to restore climate of law and order to allow for humanitarian operations; Secretary-General's Special Representative to meet four Cambodian factions in Beijing on Thursday.

- Some 1.3 million Mozambican refugees to return home over three years under largest repatriation operation ever undertaken by UNHCR in Africa; Agency appeals for $203 million.

- United Nations owed $985.6 million in regular contributions; peace-keeping shortfall totals $1.5 billion; financial situation described as "bleak".

- Secretary-General expresses deep concern over killing of staff members of French non-governmental organization in Iraq.

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The Unified Task Force (UNITAF) succeeded in restoring hope to Somalia after arriving there in December, Jonathan T. Howe, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, said today as operational authority was handed over to the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II). He

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congratulated Lieutenant-General Robert Johnston and the personnel of UNITAF who had participated in "Operation Restore Hope".

The United Nations was committed to national restoration for Somalia, Admiral Howe said. UNOSOM II had a broader mandate, under Security Council resolution 814 (1993), than UNITAF. It would continue to work for peace, stability, law and order in the country and would assist in providing relief and in reconstructing the economy. In many areas, the priorities were now rehabilitation and development rather than survival.

A major task would be the implementation of the Addis Ababa Agreements of January and March, he said. The Somali people would be responsible for the success of the Agreements, but UNOSOM II would provide assistance under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. With a two-year transitional period for the re-establishment of legitimate representative government, Somalis had a realistic time-frame in which to restore civil institutions, ensure economic recovery and provide for their own security, concluded the Special Representative.

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The Bosnian Serbs' signing of the Vance/Owen peace plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina last weekend in Athens marked a "decisive moment in efforts to stop the conflict in the region", according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Everything possible must now be done to bring the peace plan into force and to implement it in accordance with its letter and spirit, he wrote in a report to the Security Council, dated 3 May. The Council had already begun consultations to consider urgently what concrete action should now be taken.

The peace plan calls for the deployment of 60,000 to 75,000 peace-keeping troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina to oversee the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the region. The United Nations troops would also monitor Bosnia's borders and the return of forces to designated provinces.

The restoration of law and order and civilian authority throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina and the preparation of internationally supervised, free and fair elections are among the civilian tasks foreseen under the plan. The return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes are also objectives of the plan.

Today's Council consultations on the former Yugoslavia were attended by Thorvald Stoltenberg, the new Co-Chairman of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, and Cyrus Vance, his predecessor, who briefed the Council on the talks in Athens. Mr. Stoltenberg will be in New York through Thursday, before leaving for Geneva via London. Mr. Vance met today with the delegation of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. He will continue to mediate between that country and Greece until an agreement is reached.

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Co-Chairman Lord Owen, who was in London today, will leave for Brussels tomorrow to meet with the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). He will remain in Europe until the Council debate on implementation of the peace plan.

Meanwhile, a delegation of the Commission of Experts, which is investigating grave breaches of humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia, has conducted talks with senior officials in Belgrade, Ljubljana, Sarajevo and Zagreb. It visited those capitals from 18 to 29 April.

The delegation underscored the importance for the Commission of hearing about violations of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols and other humanitarian law, to enable the Commission to fulfil its mandate under Security Council resolution 780 (1992).
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A Japanese Civilian Police monitor serving with the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was killed and five Dutch personnel wounded in an attack this morning by unidentified assailants in the north-west of Cambodia, according to a United Nations spokesman today. The incident took place in an area controlled by the Khmer Rouge, but the identity of the attackers was not yet confirmed.

Meanwhile, United Nations humanitarian and development agencies, in a statement issued in Phnom Penh yesterday, have appealed to Cambodian political leaders "to exert their influence and authority" over local leaders to restore a climate of confidence, law and order, which would allow humanitarian organizations to continue their operations. During the last few weeks, the security situation had "markedly deteriorated" in certain parts of Cambodia, they said.

The agencies warned that not only did the increasing violence have a negative effect on their ability to conduct non-political humanitarian operations, but it hampered the conduct of the much-needed relief and reintegration operations and might force the agencies to scale down their activities in Cambodia.

The appeal was issued to the Chairman of the Supreme National Council for Cambodia, Norodom Sihanouk, and Cambodia's political leaders , with the support of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi.

The agencies involved in Cambodia are the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

In a related development, Mr. Akashi left Phnom Penh this morning for Beijing where he will meet tomorrow with Prince Sihanouk. A series of talks

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will also be held on Thursday, 6 May, with representatives of the four Cambodian factions to discuss "peace prospects in Cambodia".

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Some 1.3 million Mozambican refugees are expected to return home over a period of three years under the largest repatriation programme ever undertaken by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Africa, according to a press release issued by the agency today. The UNHCR has appealed for $203 million to pay for the operation.

Among the obstacles facing the operation is the slow peace process in Mozambique, the fragile economic situation, famine, and the estimated 2 million mines spread out in the country.

According to the UNHCR, 1.1 million Mozambicans sought refuge in Malawi and another 200,000 fled to other neighbouring countries during the 16 years of civil war. In addition, 250,000 unregistered refugees in South Africa, 100,000 in Zimbabwe and 50,000 in Tanzania are also expected to benefit from the operation.

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As of 30 April, outstanding assessed contributions to the United Nations regular budget totaled $985.6 million, according to a United Nations spokesman. Only 41 Member States had paid their annual assessments in full by the end of April, even though payment was due at the end of January.

Meanwhile, outstanding assessed contributions to peace-keeping operations totaled $1.5 billion, said the spokesman, who described the Organization's financial situation as "bleak". As a result, problems had arisen in meeting the operational requirements of several peace-keeping operations. The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM), the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) were the hardest hit.

To enable the United Nations to respond rapidly to peace-keeping needs, the General Assembly had established, by resolution 47/217 (1992), a Peace-keeping Reserve Fund of $150 million under the authority of the Secretary-General. A total of $32.9 million had already been loaned from it to UNAVEM, UNIKOM and ONUSAL to meet cash-flow requirements. In addition, some $32 million must be reimbursed to the General Fund from amounts loaned to UNAVEM, UNTAC and ONUSAL during March 1993. Thus, the available balance in the Fund will be exhausted after the reimbursement is made.

In addition to its problems in meeting the operational requirements of several missions, the United Nations owed about $360 million to troop-contributing countries for personnel and equipment, the spokesman added.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today expressed deep regret and concern over the killing in Iraq of two local staff members of the French non-governmental organization Equilibre, and the wounding of a third.

The United Nations expected the relevant authorities to cooperate fully in the investigation of the incident, which resulted from the explosion of a hand grenade, in the Suleimaniyah Governorate, according to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General.

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